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Group Charges He Offered Saudi Military Data to Israel

Arabs Ask New Probe of Defense Official

By RUDY ABRAMSON, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—The National Assn. of Arab Americans called Monday for an investigation of the Justice Department's handling of espionage allegations made seven years ago against a Senate aide who since has become a deputy assistant defense secretary with chief responsibility for controlling the export of high-technology items to the Soviet Bloc.

In contending that the initial investigation was "insufficient" and "closed prematurely," the Arab-American group said that grounds exist not only to review the original investigation of the defense official, Stephen D. Bryen, but also to inquire into the Defense Department's granting him a top-secret security clearance.

Espionage Charges

The call for the review opens a new chapter in a controversy that has gone on since 1978, when Michael P. Saba, an officer of the Arab-American group, charged that he had overheard Bryen offering to give Israeli officials Pentagon documents concerning Saudi Arabian air bases. At the time Bryen, who is Jewish, was on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Monday's effort to have Bryen reinvestigated was based on a 180-page report by a law firm hired by the National Assn. of Arab Americans to study hundreds of pages of Justice Department documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and as a result of a lawsuit filed against the Justice Department nearly three years ago.

Based on analysis of the documents, the report concluded that "a sufficient basis exists for an inquiry into the adequacy of the investigation conducted by the Justice Department and the adequacy of the procedures employed by the Department of Defense in granting Bryen a security clearance for his present position."

The report was sent to the Defense Department and the House and Senate Judiciary and Armed Services committees.

Political Pressure Alleged

The association, repeating accusations it has made for years, contended that the Justice Department was under political pressure and did not adequately pursue the investigation, which finally concluded that there was not sufficient basis for espionage charges even though the chief of the internal security section of the criminal division recommended taking the matter to a grand jury.

A Justice Department investigative memorandum obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and made public by the Arab group Monday said that the FBI file did not include any evidence that Bryen had passed defense secrets to the Israelis or had violated the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

The memorandum, addressed to Assistant Atty. Gen. Philip Heymann, said: "The file contains no evidence of either type of criminal conduct. It does indicate that Bryen is strongly pro-Israeli, that he has close contacts with Israeli officials and that he has attempted to secure information regarding Jordanian

missiles and the Saudi Arabian base. This information—though perhaps not in the detail requested—appears relevant to Bryen's staff duties related to the Middle East subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee."

The Arab-American group maintains that vital information to support its case is still being withheld by the Justice Department.

Association spokesmen said that one reason they went ahead with their call for a new investigation rather than await the outcome of other litigation under the Freedom of Information Act was last month's arrest of Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard on a charge of selling classified documents to Israel.

"Our persistency," the association said, "is fueled by our concern that national security interests of the United States are at risk. The Pollard case and recent evidence of illegal Israeli acquisition of American military technology . . . indicate both an active Israeli espionage process directed against the United States and a heavy emphasis on our military technology."